



### ***Marketing Kansas Beef Abroad***

## **Kansas Beef—What the Consumer Wants**

Kansas beef producers and processors received some good news recently. Japan, the state's second largest export market for beef, and Taiwan, our fifth largest, have agreed to frameworks under which they will resume importing American beef.

In 2003, before a cow in Washington state was diagnosed with BSE, Japan imported \$175.1 million worth of Kansas beef. Taiwan's beef imports that year were valued at \$2.39 million.

In Japan, Kansas beef is marketed as a brand that is synonymous with high quality. To preserve our share of this important market, I met with Japanese retailers and trade officials in September to find out how I could expedite resumed trade.

I learned that Japanese consumers want to know where their food comes from. In their supermarkets, food items are identified with specific farms and farmers. As Japan negotiated the conditions for resuming American beef imports, they consistently pushed for traceability through animal identification.

I shared what I learned with a team of stakeholders representing all facets of Kansas beef production, including ranchers, beef feeders and processors, grain growers, state agencies and academia. We agreed that Kansas needs to promote voluntary animal identification systems to help us meet the preferences of Asian consumers.

Already, many cattle producers and feedlot operators use identification systems to collect data on the quality of beef they produce. More would initiate systems if they knew more about the animal identification program USDA plans to launch in 2006, so I wrote U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Ann Veneman urging her to set baseline requirements for voluntary identification systems.

Although the direct impact of resumed trade with our Asian partners is on farmers, ranchers and beef processors, agricultural trade affects all Kansans. Most of us know that Kansas is the wheat state, producing more wheat than any other state in the nation, but fewer may know that we rank third in red meat production. It's a distinction that brings with it thousands of jobs and a significant impact on our state's economy.

I am committed to do whatever I can to endorse and promote our wonderful Kansas beef. I will continue to work with federal officials to make sure that as we move to implement voluntary compliance we know as clearly as possible what the rules are so our producers don't expend extra resources trying to anticipate the federal program.